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COBBETT'S LETTERS TO LANDLORDS,

*On the Agricultural Report
and Evidence.*

LETTER X.

*Bollitree Castle, Herefordshire,
15 Nov. 1821.*

LANDLORDS,

275. WE now come to the last proposition of the Committee, which is, in meaning, as follows:

XIII. *That the ASCENDENCY of the landed interest, as EVINCED BY THE PRACTICE OF THE CONSTITUTION, is most beneficial to the country.* 55.

276. Why such an observation as this should have been brought, neck and heels, into such a paper as this Report, may very well be asked; but, we shall see the reason presently; and, when we have

seen that, we will, with the Committee's leave, inquire into the truth of the proposition. Let us first, however, take the very words of the Committee. "Looking to the possible contingencies of war, Your Committee are not insensible to the importance of securing the country from a state of dependence upon other, and possibly hostile, countries, for the subsistence of its population;—looking to the Institutions of the country, in their several bearings and influence in the practice of our constitution, they are still more anxious to preserve to the landed interest, the weight, station and ascendancy, which it has enjoyed so long, and used so beneficially. Their first wish, therefore, is, that, whatever general suggestions they may offer, should be

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"scrupulously examined with a due regard to these two considerations."

277. Do they indeed! Do they look to the "*possible contingencies of war?*" They ought, indeed; but, *do* they; *can* they; and, in the same breath, propose to continue a debt of *eight hundred millions?* Can they think of a war with France and America, and yet propose to keep a paper-money afloat? And can they hope to carry on war for *half an hour* without a paper-money, just such as it was, or a great deal worse than it was, before? If they *can* really think of any of these things, they must be what (with *Six-Acts* in my eye) I dare not trust my pen to describe.

278. However, we will not now criticise the Ministers as *warriors*: we will leave them to have another war-frolic as soon as they please: they are harmless enough *now* in that way: they are like a lately-mischievous but now miserable old boar, deprived of his spirit and his tusks knocked out; and

a more dejected and deplorable creature it is hardly possible to find in existence. We will leave them as *warriors*, and come to their eulogium on "the *practice* of the Constitution."

279. It is not very easy to discover what they mean by *institutions* of the country having *bearings* on the *practice* of the Constitution. This is a fine specimen of the *deep* and *dark*. Make a puddle *muddy*, says SWIFT, and it seems as deep as the sea. However, in plain English, this is the meaning of this passage: that, in whatever they propose, they would wish to keep in view, the *upholding* of the *great Land-owners*, in order that they may not lose the power which *they now have* of *putting members into the House of Commons*, which power has been so long enjoyed by them, and so *beneficially used*.

280. No man denies that the great land-owners have long *enjoyed* this power: no man denies, that this is the *practice* of the Constitution: but many even open-

ly deny, and a great majority of the people, of all ranks and degrees, *now* begin to deny the opinion, that this *practice* has been *beneficial* to the country at large, and that it finally will be beneficial *even to the great land-owners themselves*, whose means of escape from the present perils are not as clear as the sun at noon-day; for, it would be strange indeed, if, during a general wreck of fortunes, theirs were wholly to escape even a sousing in the water.

281. The best, and indeed, the only way to judge of the goodness or badness of any practice is, to ascertain its effects, its consequences. Thus, in judging of the French Revolution, for instance, we are not to inquire what fooleries or violences were committed during its progress; but, we are to ask, *what has it produced in the end?* And, if we find, as we do find, that it has freed that fine and populous country, from a tyrannical noblesse, who played the despot in every village, who compelled the people to bake their bread

at the ovens of these tyrants and to pay a tax on it, and who held them in a state of the most abject slavery; if we find that it has taken a third part of the real property of the country out of the hands of a set of lazy, luxurious monks, and distributed it amongst the industrious cultivators of the land; if we find, that it has swept away an enormous debt, and the most odious, vexatious and oppressive taxes that ever were known in the world, those of *one other country* only excepted; if we find, that it has produced a representation of the people that is not *a mere sham*; if we find, that fair and open trial has taken place of those base and cruel private condemnations that used to take place; if we find, that the Revolution has made a happy people of the most wretched peasantry that ever disgraced the globe; if we find, that it has renovated the French nation, made it really prosperous; given solid means; enabled it to prepare, slowly and surely, to assert its rights, or, to

take just vengeance on its base foes, by means of war; if we find, that the French Revolution has done all these things, we must declare it to be *a very good thing itself*.

282. SOLOMON tells us to look at the *end*; not at the beginning or the middle, of a course of action. Let us try the "*practice of our Constitution*" by this unerring test. But, why the *practice*? Why not talk of the Constitution *itself*? Can the *manner* be of more importance than the thing itself? Why resort to the use of this word *practice*? It would not do to say, that, "above all things we must take care *not to do any thing to let in Reform*." It would not do to say that in so many words; and, hence, I imagine, this word *practice* was resorted to. But, let us proceed to try this practice by the test of experience.

283. This practice has been going, full swing, for a *hundred and four years*; that is to say, ever since the Whig-parliament, which

was chosen to sit for *three years*, passed an act to lengthen its term to *seven years*, and to cause all future parliaments to sit for the same length of time. There began this famous "*practice*." And what has it produced in the end? Not in the *end*, indeed; for that is to come; but what has it produced *up to this time*? We have had many wars, many victories, more defeats, the *gain* of India and the loss of America. But, how do we stand? Externally the practice has created a new nation; a great maritime nation, with the best ships and best seamen in the world, ready to cope with us at any moment; and, it so is, that, if we were at war with France and America, an event naturally to be expected would be an *invasion of Ireland* from New England. In short, to preserve the West Indies, and to prevent, at the same time, an invasion of Ireland, in case of a war with these two powers, appears to me impossible; that is to say, unless the whole of our system be changed, and of course unless

the famous *practice* be abandoned, before such war shall take place.

284. This is one thing that the *practice* has produced; for, most assuredly, if that *practice* had not been in vogue, the United States would still have been colonies of England, instead of being a nation able to beat her single handed; able to defeat and capture two of her fleets with an inferior force. I beg the reader not to think that this was owing to some *accident*. It was owing to natural causes; owing to superior skill in the making of the ships, in the managing of them, and to superior strength and activity in the seamen. The American officers are not selected through the influence of the "*practice*;" and the seamen share largely in the gains of war, and are therefore selected for their bodily powers and moral character united.

285. This, then, the creation, the raising up and establishing of this formidable maritime rival and enemy, is one of the deeds of the "*practice*;" and, whether this be one of its *beneficial* effects, I may

safely leave the reader to judge.

At the same time the *practice* has done and is doing, all it could and can do, to add to the maritime power of France. It is doing this in the most effectual of all possible ways; that is to say, by driving people from this country to spend their money in that country. This is neither more nor less than sending a part, and a considerable part, of the fruit of English labour to be carried to France, to assist to make her prosperous and to add to her strength; and, of course, to her means of injuring and humbling England.

286. Many things in addition the *practice* has done with regard to external matters, all having a tendency to make this country feeble in the scale of nations; but, we will pass these over, for the present. I confine myself to *France and America*; and I put it to any man of common understanding, whether he think, that we should now be able to meet those two nations in war, with a debt of eight hundred millions

hanging about our necks ! Freed from that, we might do great things ; but, and let this be well observed, this *debt* has been produced by "*the practice*;" is the creature of "*the practice*," and must *live*, or *die*, with it, one being the root and the other the trunk of this tree of *benefits*.

287. As to the *internal* state of the country, the internal effects of the *practice*, Ministers' speeches and kings' speeches, and hired newspapers, magazines and reviews, say that those effects are excellent. I say, that they are the worst that can possibly be. But, in order to avoid all *dispute*, we will take the state of the country as it is described to us in this very Report. And what is it ? It is this : that the cultivators of the land (three-fourths of the people) are in a state of *distress* ; that the land cannot now be cultivated *without loss* ; that *all classes* of the community have, each in its turn, *smarted under the injury inflicted on it by the Bank stoppage*, and that the owners and occupiers

of the land are now smarting under injury inflicted by this cause ; that the state of the country is one of *great difficulty* and *distress* ; that *abundant crops and fine harvests tend to augment this difficulty and this distress* !

288. Now, what do we want more than this ? What do we want more, to shew the nature, tendency and result of "*the practice* of the constitution ? " This is the state of things, which the Committee say exists ; and we know well, that it has not been produced by any convulsion in nature ; by any flood, hurricane, or tempest. We know, that God has dealt by us as he was wont to deal by our forefathers, in whose time it was, as it had been from the foundation of the world, looked upon us as a *blessing* to have abundant crops and fine harvests. This state of things has, then, been produced by those amongst us who have the power of making the rest of us do what they pleased ; by those amongst us who have had the power to put us to death if we

disobeyed the laws that they made; by those, in short, who derive their power from "the *practice* of the constitution."

289. And let us now see *how* they have gone to work, and how they have proceeded in producing this state of things. The people, or, at least, great numbers of them, wished, thirty years ago, to do away the *practice* of the constitution, and to revert to the constitution *itself*; and, at this time, they were encouraged in their endeavours to effect this by the people of France, who had just begun that revolution which has, in the end, produced their present ease and happiness. Those who were engaged in "the *practice*" made war upon the French people, and persuaded a great part of the people of England, that it was necessary to destroy the revolution in France in order to *preserve* the *property* and the *religion* of the people of England! This war required immense sums of money to carry it on. It was impossible, by the

means of *taxation*, to raise money enough for this purpose. Those who derived their power from "the *Practice*" had, therefore, recourse to *borrowing*, and they issued large quantities of paper-money, in order to make borrowing more easy. Having gone on in this way for about *five years*, the people began to suspect the solidity of the paper-money; and they, accordingly, ran, in great crowds, to the Bank, to get gold and silver for the paper that they held. The Bank had not gold and silver enough to pay them. In a fright, the Directors of the Bank went to the Minister, told him their state, and asked him, "*when he would think proper to INTERFERE.*" The Privy Council issued an *Order* to the Bank not to pay any more gold or silver!

290. This is a memorable epoch in the history of the "*Practice*" of the constitution. The *practice of the Constitution* produced an Act of Parliament, called an Act of *indemnity*, to screen

the Directors, the Ministers, the Privy Councillors and all others concerned in this violation of the law. It next produced other acts, in succession, to make the paper-money, down to one pound notes, become the sole current money of the country; and without placing any check on the issuers as to the *quantity* that they issued. This caused a revolution in all prices; so that a thing that used to sell for five shillings now sold for fifteen shillings. Thus all contracts for time were virtually violated; servants were robbed of part of their wages; deductions were made from the wages of the labourer; the labouring classes became miserable; and the number of parish-paupers received a frightful addition.

291. In the meanwhile the *Practice* pushed on the war, and carried on its borrowings, till, at last, it got a debt the *annual interest* of which required more, in various shapes, than 40 millions. It did not, with all this, effect its grand purpose; for, though it

hired more than a million of armed men to fight against the French, the French got rid of their swarms of petty despots; of the gormandizing monks; and of all their grievous oppressions. The *Practice* defeated them in war; overwhelmed them with myriads of armed men brought together, by means of its paper-money, from all parts of the earth; but the French have, as we have seen, ended their strife in obtaining a representative government, and in being in a state of great and solid prosperity.

292. The persons engaged in carrying on "the *Practice*" now found themselves at *peace*; and they had enacted, that, *when peace should come*, they would cause the Bank to pay its notes in gold and silver. This was not done; it is not done even yet, though the peace has been made more than *seven years*! However, in 1819, they enacted, that the Bank should be compelled to pay in gold and silver in 1823. This act contained

promises, that caused the quantity of paper-money to *grow less*. This caused prices to *begin to go back* on their way from 15s. to 5s. Prices are now on their march downwards, and have made considerable progress.

293. This has produced a virtual violation of all contracts the other way. A man, who, in 1813, bargained to pay 100*l.* in 1821, has 200*l.* to pay instead of 100*l.* But, the great thing of all is, that the interest of the *Debt*, which had been contracted by the persons who carry on the *Practice*, has now to be paid in gold and silver, and, of course, the persons receiving that interest, will now receive *three* for one, long before we come to actual legal payments in gold and silver!

294. Thus it is that *distress* and *difficulty* is coming (for they are *hardly felt yet*) upon this nation; thus it is, that England is becoming a poor, feeble, crippled nation, borne down by debt, and wholly unable, while that debt hangs on her, to attempt to go to war, or

even to *talk* of war. And, as we have seen, she has been brought into this miserably degraded state by no convulsion of nature; by no visitation of God; but, merely by human means. We have all the chain of causes clear before our eyes. These causes are *acts of parliament*, which are all now to be seen in the statute-book, and all proceeding directly from the will and pleasure of those, who have derived from "the practice of the constitution" their power of making those acts.

295. Now, then, is not this statement of mine *true*? Can any part of it be *denied*? And if it be true, has this practice of the Constitution been *beneficial* to the kingdom? Are the Committee correct in describing the tendency and effects of this practice? Will any man, at *this* day, and with the difficulty and distress in his eye, say that he sees any proof of the *benefits* of this practice? Will any man say, that he can discover any danger in this practice being *changed*?

296. Nor let it be pretended, that that which has now come upon us could have been anticipated by no human foresight. There are my twenty years' Registers to prove the contrary. But, if we were to choose to avoid adverting to particulars, is it not enough to have shewn, that the ruin of a great body of as skilful, as industrious, as moral, as prudent men as ever existed upon the face of the earth; is it not enough to have shown, that the ruin, the heart-breaking, of a body of men like this, have been caused by, have directly proceeded from, acts of parliament; is it not enough to have shown this, in order to be justified in flatly denying the proposition of the Committee, and in asserting, that the present manner of choosing Members of Parliament is not *beneficial to the nation*?

297. Those who contend for the present mode of choosing this body of lawgivers have always this dilemma to get out of: either the parliament *intended* to bring things

to this pass, or they *did not*. If they *did intend* to spread ruin around amongst the farmers of this industrious land, what are we to say of their *hearts*; if they have done it *without intending to do it* (as they assuredly have) what are we to say of their *heads*? They themselves now confess, that they have got the nation into a state of difficulty and distress, for which they have no *remedy*; and, are we still to say, that their measures have been *beneficial to the nation*? Was such a conclusion ever before come to by rational beings? It is clear to all eyes, that a *great change*, a *radical change*, must take place; and yet, are we to say, that the *root of all* is to remain untouched? That the *cause* is still to remain, and that we are to hope to see the effects put an end to?

298. If we look a little more into particulars, what proof shall we discover of those beneficial effects which the Committee ascribe to the predominant influence of what they call the landed in-

terest! Are we to look for it in the Act which quashed proceedings against the *non-resident Clergy*, and which has caused those clergy to carry the produce of their livings to be spent at a distance from the spot whence it proceeded, and not unfrequently out of the kingdom? Shall we find it in the *sinking fund*, which was the joint work of the two parties, and which is now called a *humbug* in the parliament itself? Shall we find it in the appropriation of millions upon millions of the taxes to *public works* for the express purpose of *preventing the people from emigrating*, and in the appropriation of other large sums to *cause the people to emigrate*? Shall we find it in the appropriating of these sums to this latter purpose, while the Committee tell us, at the same time, that the "*increase of our population*" is to be reckoned amongst the *means of our extricating ourselves from the present distress*? Shall we find it in the notorious fact, that, in 1816, the House

ascribed the distress of the nation to an *insufficiency of mouths*; and, in 1817, to an *insufficiency of food*? Shall we find it in the opinion of the Prime Minister, seconded by that of this Committee, that a short crop or wet harvest would tend to the *relief of the grower of the corn*? Shall we find it in the *Resolution*, solemnly passed in 1811, that the paper money had *not depreciated*, and in the Act of 1819, which declared it to be *still depreciated*, even after it had been raised greatly in value since 1811? Are we to find it in the Act of 1819, which compels the nation to pay *three for one* for money which the House had taken on loan; which attempts that which never was attempted before in the world, namely, to force a degraded currency back to its sterling value, without any alteration in the *letter of contracts*? Shall we find it in the present obstinate perseverance in a scheme, which is manifestly as impracticable, as impossible to be carried into full execution as it would be

to pluck the Sun from the sky ? Shall we find it in a parrot-like repetition of the words *national honour and good faith*, applied to a thing, which is in effect a violation of all the laws of debtor and creditor, and of every contract for time ? Shall we find it in that series of measures, which has rendered " *necessary* " (as the advocates of them assert them to have been) laws to suspend the people's personal liberty, and to place the imprisonment of their bodies, for ten years out of the last thirty, at the will and pleasure of the Ministers of the day ? Shall we, without, as we might do, swelling the list out to the length of a volume ; shall we find it ; shall we find the beneficial effects of this *influence* ; shall we find an evidence of its utility ; shall we find a proof of its goodness, in the ever-memorable fact, that the persons chosen by this influence have passed an Act to subject to *banishment for life* any man that may say any thing which shall have a TENDENCY to bring them into CONTEMPT !

299. Good God ! And, with all these, and a thousand other things, before us, are we still to be told, that this *influence* has been beneficial to us ? While, indeed, all wore the outward face of prosperity, though it was a false face ; though it was a painted and plastered face ; while our affairs wore that face, it might be endurable to be told of the good effects of the *influence*. It might, then, in answer to those who prayed to have the *Constitution* restored, be not so very impudent to say, " the *practice* of the *Constitution* is better ; for, see, how it produces prosperity ! " But, now, when it is acknowledged, even by the Committee themselves, that the nation is in a state of difficulty and distress, and when this Committee declare, that an arable farm cannot be cultivated without loss, and when they have no remedy to offer ; to assert now, that this influence has been beneficial to the nation, does certainly require powers of front that rarely fall to the lot of human beings.

300. If, as I before was about

to observe, it be contended, that *nobody could have done better*; that that which has happened might have happened in spite of all that human wisdom could have done, I, for my part, have my answer ready. I have to appeal to *forty volumes of Registers*, the work of *twenty years*. Numerous others have used their endeavours to prevent that which is now coming upon us. Let each speak for himself; let every one come forward and claim his due. I shall claim mine; and there are my *forty volumes*, or, at least, *thirty-eight* of them, to bear witness against this system of the *practice*. For the whole of these *nineteen years* have I been pointing out the dangers which must, in the end, result from this system of *paper-money*. I have been warning the Government of the consequences; showing it how those consequences might be avoided; doing, in short, every thing in my power to obtain the adoption of *timely remedy*, and to prevent those *shocks* which we are now experiencing, and

that final *convulsion* which now appears to be inevitable.

301. My reward has been punishment of body, loss of the fruit of *nineteen years'* of unremitted labour, exile to avoid a dungeon, and calumny, public and private, from three hundred publications almost incessantly pouring forth upon me their polluted streams, while the *tongue* of still baser calumny has been busy in tens of thousands of channels. Every thing that craft and hypocrisy, at some times, and that bold and unblushing falsehood and villany, at other times, could invent and execute, wherewith to delude honest ignorance and to feed honest prejudice, has been in constant play against me, and against my zealous endeavours to prevent the calamities that are now staring the nation in the face. Falsehood, fraud, violence, treachery of every description; the dreadful enmity of irresistible power; the deadly envy of associates; the heavy blows of the strong; the viperous bite of the feeble: all, every thing

hostile to human efforts have I had to bear up against. And the wonder with reasonable men, is, not that I have not succeeded in preventing those mischiefs that it was the object of my labours to prevent; but that I have not been, long and long ago, utterly destroyed both in body and in mind. The laws, which protect other men, have, in *effect*, been no protection to me. I have been as a stranger in my native land, the interest and honour of which I have always endeavoured to promote and uphold, and to turn my back on which, even in the days of my exile, I never did in one single instance by deed or word. I have been as an outlaw in the midst of society, without any offence legal or moral. Exemplary in every department of life; gentle, kind, indulgent and generous to every creature coming within the sphere of my power, I have been held forth and generally believed to be a monster of severity, injustice, and cruelty. That which is accounted foul and base and

deserving of universal execration, when practised towards other men, has been reckoned fair and meritorious when practised towards me. Villains who would have been hunted out of society had the injury of another man been the object of their frauds and treasons, have been applauded, caressed, hugged and rewarded, because their villanies were thought to tend to my destruction.

302. As to the persons in authority, if every drop of ink from my pen had been to the nation what a burning coal is to silk and fine linen, they could not have taken greater pains to prevent the circulation of my writings; and, as is clear in the recollection of the country, one of the Ministers distinctly urged as an argument for passing the *power-of-imprisonment Bill*, the inability of the Law-officers of the Crown to find any thing criminal in the "Cheap Publications." To clip the wings of these, it has been *enacted*, that they shall be sold at a *higher price!* And, that *I may not largely profit*

by them, that they shall contain a *large quantity of paper*! By dint of talent, and of industry without a parallel, even these deeds of power have been rendered nugatory; and, at this very time, in spite of all that has been done, I have more readers, and more ardent friends, than at any former period; and it is impossible, for any one but a *besotted aristocrat* not to perceive, that I have *now*, even amongst the middle class of society, a stronger party than either of the factions can pretend to, while *reason* and *events* are constantly at work to augment its numbers and to add to the weight of its character. After all these years, after this *whole age*, of detraction employed against me, there are a greater number of men to have *confidence* in me than in either of the factions, and who would rather stake their fortunes upon measures suggested by me than on those suggested by those factions united. What, then, will be the case, when ruin shall have advanced farther in its progress?

When the losses, the sufferings, shall be multiplied a hundred fold, and when absolute despair shall have succeeded to the tantalizing uncertainty and racking anxiety that now prey on the minds not only of tradesmen and farmers, but also on those of the inferior and more numerous class of Landlords!

303. Will calumny still be at work with her hundreds of presses and her hundreds of thousands of tongues? Let her! Will stupid pride still say that destruction from other hands is preferable to salvation by mine? Let it! Will both factions, dog and cat as to every other matter, cling together like oysters in the vain attempt to *keep me down*? Let them! Be the consequences on their own heads. I shall have no part of the ruin to answer for, and shall not participate in it; and the satisfaction which I shall be fairly entitled to feel in the hour of confusion and dismay will be no more than the just and appropriate vengeance for indignant talent to

take on conceited, insolent and malignant imbecility.

304. Thus I close my commentaries on the Report of the Agricultural Committee, which commentaries would, if I had been in parliament, have been made there, on the very next day after the delivery of the Report, and would, of course, have been read by the whole country in a few days afterwards. It has pleased the *rich ruffians* of Coventry to order it otherwise; and to place there, in my stead, *Peter Moore* and *Edward Ellice*, of whom I give them and the country joy with all my heart. I ought, too, perhaps, to congratulate myself; for this nation *must suffer*, and *greatly suffer*, before the dictates of reason and of justice can prevail.

WM. COBBETT.

POSTSCRIPT.—MR. WEBB HALL has published a pamphlet, containing *his* commentary on the Agricultural Report. I think, and, indeed, I *know*, that MR. HALL is in error; that, though he pos-

sesses great ability as a farmer, and writes exceedingly well, he deceives himself; *wholly deceives himself*, as to the *real cause* of the frightful ruin that is now spreading itself over the once prosperous families of the farmers of this kingdom. If I had wanted any thing to satisfy me *as to this cause*, I have seen and heard quite enough since I left home. Now, the desirable thing is, *to put a stop to this ruin*, or, at least, to mitigate it, in cases where it can be *mitigated*, amongst *renters*. From their ignorance of *the cause of the low prices*, they are led to hope that *things will come about*; and, in that hope many have proceeded, and many more are proceeding, to the spending of their last shilling, and to bring utter ruin on their families. This fatal delusion has been, in great part, occasioned by the importance attached to a *Corn Bill*; and MR. HALL's endeavours, the object of which has been to benefit the farmers, have, I am convinced, greatly aided in producing their ruin. It is, there-

fore, my intention to address, the week after next, a *Letter of Remonstrance* to Mr. WEBB HALL; and to make to him a proposition for making a *fair appeal* to the minds of the farmers. They are, at present, the geese with the golden eggs; and they are suffering themselves to be *ripped up* by the *Landlords*.

If we consider the means that have been made use of to deceive and cajole this class of the community, we are not to be surprised that they are going headlong into ruin. Now, I think it my duty to do all that I am able to do to prevent the total ruin of so many thousands of respectable families; and this is the plan which I have in contemplation for effecting that purpose. The Register, if it could go into every farmer's house, would put a stop to the ruin *at once*; and would send off to America, or to France, every man sentenced to his utter and inevitable ruin by Peel's Bill. It would put a stop to the taking of ruinous leases. In short, it

would save those who are not already ruined. But, alas! How many farmers read the Register? Some do, and not one of them has been ruined by the times, which gives me great satisfaction. The object is, to make renting farmers see the causes that are at work! If they could clearly see these, they would be right in a twinkling. Now, I could put upon one single sheet of paper an explanation of these causes. But, then, how am I to get this sheet of paper into every farm-house? I intend to make a proposition upon this subject to Mr. WEBB HALL, which, I think, he will not reject, seeing that he cannot do it consistently with a due regard to the interest of the farmers, whose cause he espouses with so much zeal.—Another measure which I intend to take, having the same main object in view, is, to invite two substantial farmers from each county to meet me in London in the second week after the meeting of parliament; and to dine at some Tavern. There we could

agree upon the promulgating of *leases, mortgages, debts, purchases and sales* even of *farm-stock*, will be greatly affected by what we shall perceive to be the bent of the mind of the renowned assembly in question. And, therefore, such a Meeting of Farmers, from the several counties, as I propose, would be attended with the greatest possible benefit. I shall, in another Number of the Register, state more in detail the means and manner of accomplishing this great object. It may, probably, be better to meet in the *third* or *fourth* week after the renowned body shall have assembled. But, I will fix on the day long enough beforehand to give good time for preparation. The newspaper wits, who are surprisingly brilliant, will call this meeting "*Cobbett's Parliament*;" but, while, I trust, we shall take care to leave nothing to laugh at in any part of our proceedings, we will not call ourselves *delegates*, or *deputies*, for fear of enabling the greatest For, observe, *prices, rents,* knaves in Christendom to frighten

the greatest fools in Christendom out of their senses ; but, we will use the modest appellation of "*Farmers' Meeting*," not after the manner of the gentlemen assembled at *Henderson's Hotel*, but with the hope of doing a little more for the farmers in one single evening, than those gentlemen would have been able to do if they had sitten till doomsday. Their eggs were addled ; ours, I trust, would contain the principle of life and effective animation.

TO

MONEY HOARDERS.

No. III.

Bollitree Castle, Nov. 17, 1821.

MY FRIENDS,

I HAVE the pleasure to inform you, that *gold* is working its way into the country. It is in tolerable circulation in some places, where it *was not* only a fortnight ago. In my two last Registers, I have

given you an account of prices in *Berkshire, Hampshire, and Wiltshire*. In the continuation of my "*JOURNAL*," you will find an account of prices in *Gloucestershire* and *Herefordshire* ; and, observe, *this* is an object, on which you must *constantly keep your eye* ; for, never forget, that, in the end, the price of land must come down to the standard of prices ; and, have I not shown as clear as daylight, that, if the Ministers persevere (and persevere they must,) prices must come down to the mark of *those of France* ! Of course, it is wise to *hoard gold*, under the present circumstances. The farmers do not see the *cause* of the *fall in prices*. Mind that. They do not see, that prices must come down lower and lower. They think, on the contrary, that the prices "*must mend*," as they call it. And, with this false opinion it is, that they continue to hold on at rents which must produce their ruin. Yet, these rents are the standard for the **PRESENT PRICE OF LAND**. This will

not be the case in a year or two hence. A farm that will now sell for a thousand pounds, will not then sell, perhaps, for more than four or five hundred pounds.

What a fool, then, must a fundholder be, not to *sell out now*, put the gold by, and be ready to purchase land, when the price of it come down!

But, besides this motive for selling out of the funds, there is that powerful motive, the apprehension of a *reduction of the interest of the debt*, upon which subject I have now something of great *pith* to put before you. I have often told you, that, if any one make a motion in the Collective Wisdom to reduce the interest of the Debt, the funds will take a glorious tumble; and, I am of opinion, that, though no one may have the "pluck" to make such *motion*, during the next session; yet, that a something will be said, if not done, to show, that the main hold of the system can remain unassailed but for a short space of time.

The newspapers, which my

friends are so good as to send me from various parts of the country, contain strong indications of a disposition on the part of the Landlords no longer to endure the pressure of the Fundlords. I will, at present, confine myself to *two* instances of this sort: one in *Lancashire* and the other in *Scotland*.

At Liverpool there is a paper, called the *Courier*, which has always been devoted to "*loyalty*." It has constantly been carrying on war against *Bott-Smith*, who publishes a sort of *whig-paper*, called the "*Mercury*," by way of burlesque, I suppose; for such a mass of dull rubbish was, surely, never before seen or heard of. This *Courier* has, however, in spite of all its loyalty, to please some of the Landlords and Shipowners and Merchants; for *Couriers* must *eat* as well as other people, and, though *tax-eaters* do very well, *loyalty-eaters* would soon grow distressingly thin.—Therefore this *Courier*, though so very *loyal*, begins, as you will presently see, to talk in good ra-

dical style about the Funds and Fundlords. He advises the people to combat this "*many-headed monster*." This mode of combat, is, as you will see, very foolish: but, let us hear him.

"In the existing state of things, the fundholder being always in the receipt of the same income, is a real gainer by the losses of others. There is no getting at him in a direct manner, without what would be called a breach of faith; but it is the interest of all to raise the price of every sort of thing, whether the production of the hand or the plough, so as to indemnify each other, and make this *many-headed monster* pay a just and reasonable price for their labour. The way to accomplish this object would be to create a greater abundance of the circulating medium in paper, to be issued by Government, or substantial individuals, upon a deposit of property of more value, at an interest of 2 or 3 per cent. or equivalent to the expenses. This would enable the farmer to hold his corn and the manufacturer his goods, without forcing them to market, to be at the mercy of the fundholder. Such a circulating medium would, probably, have another good effect by operating upon the exchanges, so as to cause absentees to receive their money to great disadvantage as to themselves, but very favourably with regard to the country.

The two great evils which this country labours under are, the pressure of the national debt and the expenditure of absentees. The last, they say, cannot be remedied without an infringement upon personal liberty; but the former may be considerably diminished by people of every description agreeing to raise the price of their respective commodities."

I will not insult the understandings of my readers by seeming to suppose, that they stand in need of any commentary of mine to enable them to perceive the foolishness of this extract. But, it is of use; because it shows us what is at work in the minds of our old, bitter and inveterate enemies. They, in short, know not what to be at. They would fain get rid of the Fundlords; but, they know not how. They are in a desperate way; and God keep them thus, till the hour, when the system shall be dissolved and the nation restored to happiness.

The other instance, that which has shown itself in Scotland, is of more importance still; and, in order to give the reader a full view of it, I must quote more

largely than I could wish, for it is not matter, but room, that I want, in spite of Six-Acts, which compel me to publish two sheets and a quarter! The article, which I am going to insert, has been sent me in the *Glasgow Journal* of the 2d of November. The reader will perceive, that it is an account of the proceedings at a County Meeting in *Renfrewshire*. A meeting of *Noblemen, Freeholders, Magistrates of towns, and Justices of the Peace*; and, as will be seen, they talk as good "*radicalism*" as ever was uttered by me. The Mr. MAXWELL, who figures here, is a Member of the Collective Wisdom; and Mr. CARLILE is, I suppose, *Provost* of Glasgow. The parts in *Italic characters* are the parts which came to me scored under by the pen of the gentleman who had the goodness to send me the paper, which, besides their being parts worthy of particular attention, show the acuteness of the gentleman who pointed them out, and show also, that there are men of sense, in all parts of the

country, to keep watch on CASTLEREAGH'S "*general WORKING of events*." I wished to leave out all but these particular parts; but, I could not do it, and, at the same time, place these important parts fairly before the reader. I, therefore, insert the whole, as it came to me in the *Glasgow Journal* before mentioned.

"*Meeting of the County of Renfrew.*"

"Pursuant to requisition, a respectable meeting of the Noblemen, Freeholders, Magistrates of towns, Justices of the Peace and Commissioners of Supply, was held Tuesday at Renfrew, to take into consideration the state of the Corn Laws. The requisition being read, on the motion of Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Alexander was called to the chair.

"Mr. MAXWELL said the subject they were met to discuss was equally involved in ignorance and irritation, and hitherto rendered perplexing in proportion as it has been canvassed. A deviation from any uniform principle is an expedition in search of difficulties, and certainly one which intimates a preference to a powerful class of the community is not likely to be disappointed of its object. The

principle which pervades our commercial policy is to admit the productions of all other countries upon payment of certain duties, and these duties have been large or small, according to the extent that the production imported was liable to do injury to the native whose property was invested, or whose labour was engaged in the business of supplying them. The wisdom of this restrictive legislation is at present questioned by some of the most powerful writers on political economy—but it is considered to be the most easy and certain mode of collecting the revenue by practical financiers, and one which, if pernicious, has been so long customary as rather to seem an obstacle to the greatest possible good, than to be felt to be a positive evil. Indeed although it is not easy to deny the truth of those theories which are opposed to the restrictive system, and few men whose fortunes are guaranteed by, or whose means of subsistence depend on its continuance, have been able to obtain sufficient faith in them to accede to the principles of a free trade. But the restrictive system has been violated and the theory of a free trade most rigorously repulsed in the anomalous and indefinite mode of indemnifying the agricultural interest for the detriment of extraordinary taxation. It is to the effects of this mode of protecting the cultivator of the soil that I have felt it to be my duty to

call your attention; and I propose, as shortly as possible, to point out to you the impolicy of continuing, under the influence of a system which gives the least possible protection to agriculture at the greatest possible sacrifice of commercial prosperity. When I speak so strongly on this matter, it is as the representative of a manufacturing county—but I think a law which *has made such a breach between the poor and the rich, which has placed the farmer and the manufacturer in direct hostility to each other, which has betrayed speculators in foreign grain into collusive practices,—I think I am morally justified in calling it the least beneficial law that could have been devised.* Next to that security for capital, and inducement to the exertions of skill which is consequent upon equitable laws, the low price of the necessities of life must be the greatest attraction to manufacturing enterprise; and when we recollect the competition for the raw products of the land, which is excited by that valuable branch of domestic industry, we must be anxious to retain it, even at some apparent sacrifice. When we increase the power of consumption in any class of society, we stamp a value on the articles they require, exactly proportionate to that increase, and vice versa. If we impede the trade of the country, we diminish the means of purchase amongst the classes dependent upon commerce,

and contract the sale of our articles; and of course lower the exchangeable value of the whole. It is thus by prohibiting the introduction of grain we choak up one of the vents of manufacture, and become liable, not only to the evil of giving undue encouragement to agriculture, but even of inflicting a sort of poll tax upon the community. This in practice is to give a great nominal value to raw produce, and in so far as it is consumable, it may bring a large price; but, if only one half of it can be consumed, the other half is in point of fact without farther value. This at least is the case in Britain, because taxes on landlord and tenant have made grain too high priced to be saleable on the Continent. The prohibition, although contingent in the letter, is now likely to become positive in the spirit, from the improved value of the currency; but if otherwise, still it continues to be injurious to the Manufacturer, by creating fluctuations in price, by producing stagnation of trade, and by making the introduction of foreign corn a speculation for the monied interest, and not a barter of raw produce against articles of manufacture. Our great national policy ought to be, to direct labour into those channels which are most productive of remuneration to the workman, because he can bear greater burdens with less suffering, by attention to this object, and may

consequently be less discontented, and of course more easy to govern. If by working a certain number of hours as an artisan, a man can exchange the commodity he has wrought up against foreign raw produce, sufficient for his wants, whilst by cultivation, for as many hours he could only obtain a scanty and inadequate subsistence, trade is his proper employment. All that the State has to do, is to see that it is the badness of soil and climate which makes his farming fruitless, and not artificial causes, such as tithe, poor laws, roads, bridges, churches, jails and other burdens principally charged upon landed property. But there may be another person who has not the same power of changing his occupation, and yet cannot furnish the artisan with food in return for his manufacture, because the burdens on his lease are almost as heavy as the whole cost of the foreign husbandman. How to meet these two interests with equal impartiality and with safety to the revenue, was a question with the legislature; and at last it was resolved that the artisan shall suffer two years out of the three, and the agriculturist one, if we may judge from the past. But in the mean time, by this uncomfortable process, the speculator grows rich, and articles of consumption, which never contributed to the revenue, are sold—although de facto, as contraband, as Hollands or Lace, in the same place where they are the

object of a sanguinary and expensive preventive service. In the mean time the absence of British direct and indirect taxes and public burdens, make a very munificent bounty to the foreign grower, depreciating British capital and skill, and promoting that of foreign cultivators. Surely the national debt is quite onerous enough, without subtracting a single spot from its field of operation, and surely if we can afford exemptions, they should be extended to any other class of society rather than the monied interest. We are told, that it is not opening the ports which now hurts us. Dantzic wheat is the foremost on the list of prices daily. "We are told, that a free and unrestricted admission of foreign grain would be sound policy." We are told, that every protecting duty is ruinous to commerce. We are told that we should abandon ourselves to the employment of supplying the whole world with manufactures. But, when we look to the effect of the duty recently imposed on Foreign Wool, as a protection to the agriculturist, and which we were told must be ruinous, we find, by the Leeds Mercury, that the woollen trade never was, in the memory of man, so good as now! And when we read the accounts of German fairs, we find that British manufactures cannot be sold, even in our present confined system of manufacture. A

free trade is an object to be desired by an experienced and wealthy people; but it must have the consent of the fundholder to be adopted immediately in the British Isles. But at all events, it is unreasonable to ask the landowner, and his tenant upon lease, to devote their fortunes to the illustration of theories; or, while manufactures remain shrouded in duties equivalent to prohibition, to offer themselves for a lonely experiment in political economy, the failure of which would be followed by the cession of their patrimony and their capital to fundholders, mortgagees, and Polish serfs. Situated as we are, less apprehension might be felt in acceding to the principles of a free trade, than in districts purely arable, from the nature of our security from competition in almost all the most valuable, as well as the most bulky articles of our husbandry. Yet when I contemplate the situation of remote agricultural districts, and the poor upon them, to the extent they are in England, and the financial condition of the Empire, I would not concur in any petition for a free trade at present. A duty not so high as to be a prohibition, unless taxes can be shown to authorise it to be of that height, which I know cannot be the case, and merely such as would put the British landed interest upon a par in point of obstacles to low prices with its Foreign competitor, in my

opinion would be not only just, but in our present circumstances politic. *I conceive that the tenant and landlord must suffer the depreciation of nearly thirty per cent on their respective properties, which all other interests have undergone by the resumption of cash payments.* I should wish to see union on this subject between the grower and the consumer, and I am most anxious to see such a trade as will give back some of those comforts to our operatives and mechanics, to which I fear the majority of them have been long strangers. I have been told, that by calling your attention to this topic, I should make myself unpopular, and do no service to any party, and I am fully sensible that I have exposed myself to the suspicion of selfishness, and that I have advocated the ancient and unfashionable practice of this nation, in opposition to the writings of the ablest theorists of the age. But I have hopes that those Gentlemen, whom I have the honour to address, and my countrymen of every rank, will believe me to have acted from a sense of public duty, and that my sentiments are grounded on a conviction that the interest of one is the interest of all, and that Providence suffers no class of society to reap permanent advantage in the depression of its fellow.

“Provost CARLILE said, it was with the greatest diffidence he rose to give his opinion on this very important subject, especially after

the able and powerful speech of the hon. Member. There were in this country two classes, which were called the landed and manufacturing interests, and by a concatenation of events, they were both on the decline. Since 1810, landed property had sunk in value one-fourth, and the same might be said of manufacturing property. They all knew how this had occurred. Before the late war, the value of land was moderate when compared with what it rose to during the war. At that time the labourers were all employed, and well paid, and every thing went on smoothly and happily. The nominal value of property had now fallen about fifty per cent, and since the peace we had lost that commercial monopoly we had formerly enjoyed. The nations have all concurred in the restrictive system too much—they are all so deeply involved in it that it would be very difficult to return to a free trade. Such were the industry and skill of our workmen, the ingenuity and enterprise of our merchants, and the perfection of our machinery, that this country had nothing to fear from a free trade. *There was one great bar in the way of a free trade however, and that was a national debt of eight hundred millions, the interest of which was thirty millions, and other twenty millions were annually required to meet the exigencies of the state.* There are only two ways in

which this great burden can be lessened. The first is by economy, and he was glad that principle had been adopted at the end of last Session of Parliament, and he trusted the Ministers at the beginning of next Session would commence retrenchment on such a liberal scale as to produce a blessing to the country. Besides the Agricultural and Commercial interests, there is another interest composed of rich Jews and great men—there is a monied interest in the country more powerful than them both. The Jews had eight hundred millions of money in the funds, for the interest of which there was a great part of the land in mortgage. Money was never plentier than at present; Bank interest was reduced to three and three and a half per cent, and it would be generous in the fundholders to come forward with a reduction of one per cent on the dividends, which would be equivalent to sweeping off a fifth part of the national debt. (Applause.) Since the alteration in the value of the currency, he could not agree with those who considered that such a reduction would be a breach of the national faith. It might give the Jews great alarm, but they could now procure provisions and purchase manufactures at a very low rate. He was happy to say, that from the cheapness of the markets, the poor were better off than they have been for a long time, but still it required care and economy, and if a poor man had three or four children,

his utmost exertions were necessary for the support of his family. He considered that a duty was preferable to the prohibitory system. They could recollect the high ground the Agriculturists took when the Corn Bill was first brought into Parliament, 120s. 110s. and 90s. were what they strenuously insisted upon, while the Manufacturing Classes universally petitioned that if it passed at all the rate might not be fixed at above 70s. or 75s. The bill was at last passed, the rate was fixed at 80s. and this high rate was the sole cause of the low prices. There is a great number of speculators in the country, who watch every act of Parliament, and carefully take advantage of every circumstance, and whenever the ports are opened, they purchase immense quantities of grain, and pour them into the country, and thus reduce the prices. He approved of a protecting duty if it was a moderate one, and all depended on that. It would be more beneficial to the country, than the present prohibitory system.

“Mr. SPIERS thought that a committee should be appointed to prepare a report on the subject. He agreed with Mr. Carlile that taxation was the great source of all our evils, and would be happy to see a reduction in the taxes. He thought a protecting duty preferable to the law as it stood, and moved that a

committee be appointed to prepare a report on the subject.

"Mr. ALEXANDER seconded the motion of Mr. Spiers, for appointing a committee.

"Mr. MAXWELL, in allusion to what Mr. Carlisle had said respecting a reduction of the interest of the national debt, said, *he had the highest reverence for Lord Liverpool, although he was opposed to him in almost every measure of policy; but he knew that a minister was so involved with the fundholders that were it even Lord Grey in place of Lord Liverpool, no good could be done. All classes would have to come forward and support the ministers against the fundholders before the interest of the debt could be reduced.*

"A committee, consisting of three of the landed interest, and also three of the manufacturing interest, was accordingly appointed, to prepare a Report, to be laid before the County at another meeting which is to be held on the first Monday of December. The Meeting then broke up."

The foregoing passages speak for themselves. But, now, let the honest fundholder, and especially if he have *children*, bear in mind, that, if any considerable number

of the Collective Wisdom talk in this way, *the funds will take a tumble!* And, that many will talk in this way, who can doubt?

But, mark what Mr. MAXWELL says in his closing speech. He says, that the Minister is so *involved with the fundholders*, that *he cannot reduce the interest of the Debt*; and that even Lord Grey could do nothing, unless *all classes were to come forward and support the Minister against the fundholders!* Why, this is just precisely what I told Lord Grey himself, in my first Letter to him, much about a year ago! Amongst *all classes* the *Reformers* are, doubtless, included; and, I told his Lordship, that even *he* would be wholly unable to touch the Debt, *unless he had them at his back.* And, *how* is any Minister to have *them* at his back? Why, by sincerely and frankly and effectively to set about a real, and not a *sham*, reform of the Parliament. This, therefore, is the point upon which the whole question, upon which the very fate

of the country hinges. The *Reformers*, the *real* ones I mean, are not such beasts as to join the Landlords and to enable them to *shake off the fundlords*, until *reform, in some shape or other, be effected!* Upon this subject I shall address the *Radicals* next week; and endeavour to prepare them, in time, for a steady and effectual opposition to all the plans of the Boroughmongers for getting rid of the Debt, unless these *first* consent to act justly by the people at large.

In the meanwhile, let me exhort you, my friends, the Moneyhoarders, to proceed with *as much celerity as possible*. "Make hay while the sun shines." Only think of the effect of a proposition to reduce the interest of the Debt! Down come the funds! You will never again see 70 gold sovereigns for 100 of 3 per cent. stock! Nay, you will never again see *forty* gold sovereigns for that same 100 of stock! Now, mind, it is I, who have been right, throughout the

whole of the eventful history of this paper-system; it is I who tell you this.

I shall conclude this Number with the statement of a fact, which I have from a correspondent at Liverpool. The Irish labourers, who come over every year to *reap* in Lancashire and Cheshire, used to carry back *Bank of England notes*; but, *this year*, they went round the town of Liverpool, and exchanged their notes for sovereigns, giving a *premium* of from *two-pence* to *four-pence* on each sovereign! Very *wisely* done! God bless the poor fellows with the fruit of their labour! They have now something worth taking care of.

WM. COBBETT.

JOURNAL.

BEING still in Herefordshire, I shall not go on with my Journal

this week, though I have a great many interesting things to communicate on several subjects. When a man has a mind to *know* what is going on, his true way is to *go and see* with his *own eyes*, or hear with his *own ears*. I now *know* many things, closely connected with politics, which I did not know when I left Kensington. I have seen and heard many things to give me great satisfaction ; but, that which has given me the greatest delight has been, to find, that, amongst the middle class, amongst the respectable traders and the *real yeomanry*, the *increase of radicalism* is prodigious. The film is taken from the eyes of thousands upon thousands. They now see clearly, that nothing but a *Reform of the Parliament* can give them and their children *security*, or even a chance of security. These men now laugh at all the attempts that Corruption is making to continue her delusions. They know the true character of all the actors in the humbug of the

day. In every county it is the same. I defy lies, fraud, imposture, hypocrisy, and villany ever to excite *false alarms* amongst them again. There are yet *many*, to be sure, who, *as yet*, do not see *clearly* ; but, they begin to *listen*, and they *cease to revile Radicals*. They allow that "*something is wrong*," and they would fain see a remedy. Those who are *renters* will soon be taught the remainder of their lesson by the *Landlords* and the *Parsons*, the one by seizing for rent and the other for tithes. This is the way to teach "*radicalism*" to stupid, or perverse, men. Faith, the Borough Lads are in a sweet pickle ! If they know which way to turn themselves, they must have more cunning than an old Jack-hare. They may double and squeak for some time ; but, we shall see them overtaken at last ; aye, and shall hear men, who have reviled Radicals, boast of meriting the *appellation*.

*To the Editor of the Morning
Chronicle.*

*Bollitree Castle, Herefordshire,
Nov. 15, 1821.*

SIR,

HAVING read in a Hereford newspaper, an extract from your's, in which it is stated, that I have *turned the front of my dwelling-house, at Kensington, into a shop for the retailing of butcher's meat at reduced prices*, and this statement being calculated to produce disappointment in some of my neighbours, I have to beg you to correct the mistatement, by informing your readers, that I have done no such thing as that which you have described. At the same time, I think it right to say, that I have, since I have resided at Kensington, killed two calves of my own breeding and fattening, and that the part of these which I did not want for my own consumption, my neighbours have had at *two-thirds* of the price that they must

have given for the same at the butcher's; in all which I am sure no man can discover any *legal* offence, unless there should be something in *Six - Acts* which makes it such. I think it right to say, further, that as long as I have the conveniences for keeping (for a while) and for killing sheep, pigs, and lambs, and as long as I can buy these for *less than four-pence a pound* (exclusive of skin, pluck, and head) at Smithfield, I am resolved never to give *sixpence a pound* for meat somewhat inferior in quality; and that, unless *Six-Acts* should be found to restrain me, I shall think myself at perfect liberty to let any neighbour, and especially a poor one, participate, whenever I kill more meat than I want, in any advantage which I may derive from this part of my domestic economy.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

I AM much obliged to the Gentleman, who has sent me BURKE'S book, with passages marked in it. I had forgotten them, though I once quoted some of them in "*Paper against Gold*." They are *pat* to the present times. It is delightful to have *Burke's* authority in such cases. *Burke* justifying "*a breach of public faith*!"—I thank W. of Liverpool very much. His fact is very interesting; and, as for *Bott Smith*, why,

if he will lie, and publish *fabricated*, or, at the least, *private*, letters, he must expect to be bastinadoed; that's all.—"A DISCIPLE" has my best thanks for his *information*. The subject of which his letter and the subjoined note treat is of importance sufficient to demand a place in the next Register.—He is right, as to *the Act*, and I was wrong.—Many other letters and many marked passages in country papers will be attended to without delay.—Such letters as require a *written answer* must, I am afraid, wait till I return to Kensington.

NOVEMBER 24, 1821.

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"statesmen;" and God knows, it was not before it was wanted by them!

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